



DECLARATION

In the matter of U.S. Patent Application Ser.
No. 09/785,509 in the name of Kazuhiro
KAWABATA


I, Mariko ENDO, of Kyowa Patent and Law Office, 2-3, Marunouchi
3-Chome, Chiyoda-Ku, Tokyo-To, Japan, declare and say:

that I am thoroughly conversant with both the Japanese and English
languages; and,

that the attached document represents a true English translation of
Japanese Patent Application No. 2000-42654 filed on February 21, 2000.

I further declare that all statements made herein of my own knowledge
are true and that all statements made on information and belief are believed to be
true; and further that these statements were made with the knowledge that willful
false statements and the like so made are punishable by fine or imprisonment, or
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Dated: October 27, 2005



Mariko ENDO

PATENT OFFICE
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[Title of Invention] SYSTEM AND METHOD FOR REGISTERING/UTILIZING
PERSONAL IMAGE INFORMATION

[Claims]

[Claim 1]

A personal image information registering/utilizing system comprising:

photographic image reading means for reading a photographic image datum shot by a digital camera and saved in a data storage media and transform them to a center server;

an input means to classify the personal information of the photographic image data;

a registering means for registering advisability of permission of the photographic image data for third parties;

a center server, which has a database that retrieves and extracts image data classified and requested by said personal data; accumulates said photographic image datum and personal information; and can retrieve and extract those data by linking them; and

a personal image information registering/utilizing system composed of an output means of the photographic image data, wherein,

when a use consent advisability is registered, the photographic image data are transferred from the media reading means to the center server, the center server saves them, image data become targets of retrievals and extractions, interested and third parties can take out the photographic image data as needed and the photographic image can be output.

[Claim 2]

A personal image information registering/utilizing system as set forth in claim 1, wherein said media reading means, said personal data inputting means and said use consent advisability registering means are used in a store server.

[Claim 3]

A personal image information registering/utilizing system as set forth in claim 2, wherein a plurality of said store servers and said center server are connected via a network and photographic image data can be output at any given store.

[Claim 4]

A personal image information registering/utilizing system as set forth in claim 1, further comprising fee paying means, wherein said photographic image data are outputted after said fee paying means is executed.

[Detailed description of the invention]

[0001]

[Field of the invention]

The present invention relates generally to a system for inputting personal digital image information such as facial photographic images. More specifically, the invention relates to a personal image information registering/utilizing system for outputting personal image information to a recording media such as a printed matter, a direct mail, a CD-ROM or an MO, etc. via a network such as the Internet; and registering and utilizing personal image information.

[0002]

[Description of Related Background Art]

Personal information such as a facial photographic image is incorporated into a personal computer by means of a digital camera or a scanner to be personally outputted as a printed matter of a full-color photographic image by means of a printer adopting a thermal transfer recording system or an ink jet recording system.

As described in Japanese Patent Laid-Open Publication No. 11-203360, there is also known a service by special traders for managing user's digital photographic image data on a network such as Internet and for accepting an order for a photographic development/print on the network.

[0003]

[Problems to be resolved by the invention]

As described above, the printed matters of photographic images are often obtained on the basis of digital photographic image data. However, the cost of purchasing finally available printed matters is too high to widely utilize the printed matters in the world.

In the present circumstances, personal image information such as a facial photographic image is utilized within a range of a user's relations such as his/her family and friends. If permission of an owner who is an object of a photographic image and who owns personal image information is obtained, a photographic image which has been taken well should be widely and effectively utilized for normal purposes, not for wicked purposes. This is significant for both of the owner and the user of the personal image information. However, in the present circumstances, third parties have little opportunity to utilize such personal image information.

[0004]

It is therefore an object of the present invention to provide a personal image information registering/utilizing system for personal photographic information where one can inexpensively acquire printed materials as outputs of digital photographic image data of a photographic image or the like of personal image information such as a facial photographic image, and third parties can effectively utilize the digital photographic image data by permission of an owner of the personal image information or individual photogenic subjects.

[0005]

[Means of solving the problems]

In order to accomplish the aforementioned objects, according to the present invention, there is provided a personal image information registering/utilizing system comprising: a media reading means that reads photographic image data shot by a digital camera and store in a data storage media and send them to a center server, a personal data inputting means that classifies personal information of the photographic image data, a use consent advisability registering means of the photographic image data to the third

parties, a center server with a database to retrieve and extract image data classified and requested from the said personal data that can accumulate the photographic image data and personal data and retrieve and extract those data by linking them and an output means of the photographic image data, where when a use consent advisability is registered, the media reading means makes the center server save the photographic image data, the photographic image data become targets of retrievals and extractions, interested and third parties can take out and output the photographic data as required.

[0006]

This system is characterized by that the said media reading means, personal data inputting means and use consent advisability registering means are performed in a store server.

Additionally, this system is characterized by that there are multiple store servers and the said store servers and center servers are connected via a network and photographic data can be output at any given stores.

Further, this system is characterized by that photographic image data is output after the fee paying processing is executed by the fee paying means.

[0007]

[Effect]

This is a system comprising a media reading means that reads photographic image data shot by a digital camera and saved in a data storage media, a personal data inputting means that classifies personal information of the photographic image data, a use consent advisability registering means of the photographic image data to the third parties, a center server having a database to retrieve and extract image data classified and requested from the said personal data that can accumulate the photographic image data and personal data and retrieve and extract those data by linking them and an output means of the photographic image data, where when a use consent advisability is registered, the photographic image data are transferred from the media reading means to the center server, the center server saves them, image data become targets of retrievals and extractions, interested and third parties can takeout and output the photographic image data for a moderate charge. The third parties can use the photographic images

effectively under the license as required.

[0008]

[Description of the Preferred Embodiments]

Hereinafter, the embodiments of the registering/utilizing system of personal image information according to the present invention will now be explained in details referring to the drawings.

Fig. 1 is a schematic view of an embodiment of the registering/utilizing system of personal image information according to the present invention.

A store server 11 has a media reading means 2 that reads out photographic image data 8 which have been picked up by means of a digital camera to be stored in data storage media, a personal data inputting means 3 that classifies personal information of the photographic image data, a use consent advisability registering means 4 of the photographic image data to the third parties, and an output means 7 of the photographic image data. Likewise, a store server 12 installed in another area has a media reading means 13, a personal data inputting means 14, a use consent advisability registering means 15 and an output means 16 of the photographic image data.

[0009]

The media reading means is designed to read photographic image data (i.e., digital data) which have been picked up by means of a digital camera to be stored in data storage media such as smart media, CF (compact flash) cards, PC cards, floppy discs, MOs (magneto-optical discs) and CD-Rs (compact disc-recordable). Each media reading means has drives for reading and writing the photographic image data from and in the data storage media so as to correspond to the kinds and image formats of the data storage media. Furthermore, the photographic image reading means for reading the photographic image data from the data storage media may include a scanner for reading a digital image from a silver salt photograph which is an analog photograph, and an apparatus for reading a digital image directly from a digital camera, which is installed in the store, to transfer the read digital image of photographic image data directly to the center server.

[0010]

Furthermore, as a system for inputting such personal data, there may be preferably

adopted a fixed coding system for electing a distinction between one or more persons and animals and plants about an object(s), sexuality, date and so forth from a predetermined hierarchy to simplify the database system to retrieve and extract and perform simpler and higher-speed processing. If the classification of personal information using such a fixed coding system leaves something to be desired, a system for directly inputting keywords characterizing personal information may be used together with the fixed coding system. It is preferable that input number of the keywords shall be limited, storage capacity of personal data and image data in the center server shall have enough capacity to make a system include a lot of image data so that many people use the system.

[0011]

Furthermore, as the personal data more accurately identifying a person, such as a full name, age (a personal age, not the assignment of a range such as date) and the position in a family make-up (the first-born son, the first-born daughter, grandchild, etc.), may be inputted as variable codes. Thus, the center server can have a so-called album managing function of collectively managing photographic images of the person and/or members of the person's family. Specifically, for example, if the first-born son "Dainippon Ichiro" is identified in the store server, all of the photographic images of "Dainippon Ichiro" can be retrieved and extracted, and if necessary, all of the photographic images in his primary school days can be edited to be outputted as an index print so that a plurality of, e.g., 36, photographic images are laid out on a single printed matter at a scale of 1 to 36. Thus, the photographic images of the person can be suitably edited and outputted.

[0012]

It is also possible to provide a service wherein the calculation of the age(s) of the person and the confirmation of an engagement, a wedding and so forth are carried out in accordance with the increase of the age(s) of the person, e.g., in accordance with commemoration at the turning points in the person, such as a birth, a festival for children of three, five and seven years of age, entrance into a kindergarten, entrance into a primary school, entrance into a junior high school, entrance into a high school, entrance into a university, a coming-of-age ceremony, entrance into employment, an engagement, a wedding ceremony and a birth, and a direct mail is dispatched every the

turning point or a printed matter having a cabinet size is sent every birth day to the person or the member of the person's family from a related client.

[0013]

The use consent advisability registering means of the present invention are designed to judge and register the advisability of permission for third parties to use photographic image data. That is, the use consent advisability registering means are designed to judge and register whether an owner of photographic image data or the owner's substitute gives permission for third parties to utilize the photographic image data (for example, for third parties to utilize the photographic image data as an image of an advertisement poster for an advertisement for a business enterprise or as an illustration of a calendar for general consumers). Furthermore, the use consent advisability registering means preferably register the advisability of permission for third parties to use the photographic image data while confirming the photographic image data serving as an object by means of a monitor or the like.

[0014]

In return for such permission for third parties to use the photographic image data, the owner of the photographic image data may be capable of acquiring the output matter of the photographic image data (the printed matter of a photographic image or the like) free of charge or at a low set charge, or members of the owner's family or the owner's friends may also be capable of acquiring the output matter of the photographic image data (the printed matter of a photographic image) free of charge or at a low set charge on given conditions (e.g., limit to the number of outputs) by inputting an identification code or a password. The case described above is the case where the printing fee is free, however, appropriately lower fee setting may be also adopted.

When a third parties actually utilizes the photographic image data which have been permitted to be used (when the third parties utilizes the photographic image data for the purpose of gain to make a profit), the third parties may pay a license fee to the owner or the like of the photographic image data on the basis of a predetermined calculation standard or the like in return.

[0015]

As the output means, a digital printer for preparing a full-color printed matter (hard copy) of the photographic image data may be used. Specifically, a digital printer adopting a thermal transfer recording system such as a sublimation transfer recording system or a thermal melting recording system, or a digital printer adopting an ink jet recording system may be used. However, a digital printer adopting a sublimation transfer recording system is preferably used since it is possible to form a high quality image equal to a full-color silver salt photographic image.

Furthermore, in this invention, the output means should not be limited to preparing the printed matters of the photographic image data, but they include a drive for writing and storing the photographic image data in a data storage media such as a smart media.

[0016]

As shown in Fig. 1, the system has a center server having a database to retrieve and extract the requested photographic image data classified from the personal data to accumulate the picture photographic image data and individual data and them by making a correlation between them and when photographic image data, which have been registered by the use consent advisability registering means so as to give permission for third parties to use the photographic image data, the photographic image data are saved in the center server from the media reading means, the photographic image data are to be searched and extracted and third persons (including persons concerned with the photographic image data) can take the registered photographic image data saved in the center server as required.

[0017]

Specifically, for example, when a third parties requests to utilize an image showing the scene where a baby girl is innocently laughing, as an image of an advertisement poster for an advertisement for a business enterprise, among much photographic image data which have been stored in the database of the center server, “human” as the distinction between persons and animals and plants, “female” as sexuality, “baby” as date, “laugh” or “playing” as keywords for the photographic image data are inputted as conditions for

photographic image data to be retrieved. The conditions thus inputted are transferred to the center server from the store server or via the network, and the photographic image data satisfying all of the conditions is retrieved and extracted from the database. At this time, the extracted photographic image data is preferably displayed on a monitor or the like of the store server to select a photographic image data, which meets required conditions, while confirming the monitor or the like. The selected photographic image data are outputted as a printed matter, or written and stored in a data storage media.

[0018]

While the personal data have been identified by fixed codes such as the distinction between persons, etc, sexuality and date, and further, keywords related to photographic image data, a specialized company or the like for managing the center server may be preferably commissioned to retrieve and extract a photographic image to provide the extracted photographic image data for a third party who hopes to acquire the photographic image data, if the personal data is not simple data which are identified by only fixed codes and keywords. As a matter of course, if a third party retrieves and extract required photographic images without commissioning specialized companies, the third party can specify search conditions for the center server by using personal data inputting device of the store server, make the monitor, etc of the store server display the result of retrievals to select photographic images.

[0019]

While the system shown in Fig. 1 have been installed in two areas, the number of store servers and installed areas should not be limited thereto, but a large number of store servers may be installed in a large number of areas. All store servers can be connected to the center server via the network and use the system at a point distant from the system.

Furthermore, the network means a network mainly including Internet or the like, and includes all of communication media having a transmission speed sufficient to transfer photographic image data and personal data, such as dedicated lines, CATV networks, dial-up connection networks and LANs.

[0020]

Fig. 2 is a schematic view of another embodiment of the personal image information registering/utilizing system of the present invention. There are media reading means that read image picture data 8 shot by a digital camera and stored in the data storage media, a personal data inputting means 3 for classifying personal information on the photographic image data, and a consent advisability registering means 4 for registering advisability of permission for third parties to use the photographic image data 8 in a single store sever 11. Further, the store server 11 comprises the fee paying means 17 of a coin input type or the like for executing a fee paying processing. After a hundred-yen coin or the like is thrown into a fee paying opening of the fee paying means to execute the fee paying processing, the output means 7 is designed to output the photographic image data.

[0021]

Likewise, a store server 12 in another region has media reading means 13, individual data inputting means 14 and consent advisability registering means 15.

In a different area from the area in which the store server 12 is installed, for example, a specialized company capable of accessing the center server is installed. The specialized company retrieves and extracts required picture images and then, puts special companies between third parties and owners of photographic images or third parties and owners of image data. The special companies or specific agents calculate fees based on a contract to consent to use and effectively utilize the precious photographic image data, and confirm the contractual coverage. Calculating the fees, confirming the contractual coverage, and determining the amount of the fee and conditions on the method of payment means the performance of the fee paying means 18. Then, the output means 16 of photographic image data can be performed.

[0022]

In the system shown in Fig. 2, the store server have been installed in two areas, however, the number of store servers should not be limited thereto. A large number of store servers may be used. All store servers are connected with the center server and use this system from distant places. Further, this system 1 calculates license fees, confirms

the contents of the contract, determines amount and method of payments, and handovers of photographic images to the third parties. In other words, the determination means to perform the fee paying means 18. Servers installed in companies specialized for retrievals or special agents for calculating fees are connect to the output means 16 in each area via the network, form prints and save the image data in the storage media.

[0023]

Fig. 3 is a flow chart for explaining the flow of a processing which is carried out in the personal image information registering/utilizing system. First, photographic image data are created and prepared as digital image using a digital camera (step n1).

The photographic image data thus prepared are often stored in the data storage media.

Then, the photographic image data thus stored in the data storage media are read from a drive (step n2).

Thereafter, the individual data to classify the individual information of the picture image are input by means of the keyboard or touch sensor panel in accordance with a predetermined format (step n3).

[0024]

Further, when the permission for third parties to use the photographic image data is given in the registration of the advisability (step n4), the photographic image data and the personal data are transferred to the next center server to be stored (step n5).

Thereafter, a fee is paid for the output of the photographic image data and data storage into the storage media (step n6). As the permission for third parties to use the photographic image data is given at step n4, the fee required is a low set fee (free of charge according to circumstances) to go to the next step n7.

After the fee paying step 6 shown above, the photographic image data are outputted so that printed images of the photographic image data are created or image data are stored into the storage media (step 7).

[0025]

When no permission to use is registered step n4, the step n5 is jumped. Fee payment in step 6 is performed by inserting coins into the coin inlet to go to the step n7

to output the photographic image data. In the step n4 of the present invention, if no permission for third parties to use of picture photographic image data is registered, photographic image data and individual data can not be stored and accumulated in the center server, and the fee becomes high because permission to use has not been issued. It is not a condition complying with the purpose of this invention.

The explanation of a flow chart of the system shown above is based on the processing performed by an owner of the photographic image data or the owner's substitute.

[0026]

On the other hand, Fig. 4 is a flow chart for explaining the flow of a processing which is carried out by a member of the owner's family or an owner's friend, where the permission of use of the photographic image data has already been registered and the photographic image data and personal data are stored in the center server and where the personal image information registering/utilizing system according to the present invention is utilized. First, a password, an authentication number and an identification code are inputted by means of a keyboard, touch sensor panel or monitor used for inputting the personal data in the store server (step n8).

Then, photograph photographic image data to be taken out of the photographic image data stored in the center server is determined while being displayed on the monitor or the like (step n9).

At this time, the photographic image data to be taken may be determined by only the password and so forth which are inputted at step n8, or only center server may be accessed by the step n8, and specified photographic image data may be neither called out, confirmed nor determined until a number of identification is input in step 9 again.

[0027]

Then, after the photographic image data are determined, a low set fee is paid (step n10).

Photographic image data are output after paying the fee (step n11).

In some cases, the step n10 is omitted from step 9 to step n11 at no charge (free) to output photographic image data.

The processes shown in Figs. 3 and 4 can be preferably realized as a program or control box for carrying out a series of operations and processes in a store.

[0028]

Fig. 5 is a process where a third parties who hopes to use a certain kind of photographic image data for profit or for the public interests uses the registration and utilization system of personal image information of the present invention.

First, a third parties shall determine the characteristics of photographic image data that it wants to obtained (e.g., categories of humans, sexuality, date, keywords to characterize the images) to determine the requirements for the photographic image data (step 12).

Then, the photographic image data of the requirements are retrieved and extracted from the database in the center server (step n13).

[0029]

Thereafter, from step n12, the fee of consents is calculated based on a contract of permission for use of the photographic image data and the contents of the contract are determined to confirm the amount of the fee and conditions on the method of payment (conclusion of a contract) (step n14).

After both step n13 and 14 are completed, the photographic image data are outputted (step n15).

The system shown in Fig. 5 is preferably processed at places under the control of the third parties (companies, bodies) or companies specialized for retrievals.

[0030]

[Effect of the invention]

A registering/utilizing system of personal image information according to the present invention consists of a media reading means that reads photographic image data shot by a digital camera and stored in data storage media, a personal data inputting means that classifies personal information of the photographic image data, a use consent advisability registering means, a database to retrieve and extract image data classified and requested from the said personal data, a center server that can accumulate the photographic image data and personal data and retrieve and extract those data by linking

them and an output means of the photographic image data, where when a consent of use is registered, the photographic image data are transferred from the media reading means to the center server, the center server save them, the photographic image data become targets of retrievals and extraction, interested or third parties can take out and output the photographic image data by paying for a moderate charge.

[0031]

When a third party actually utilizes the said photographic image data as requested, which have been permitted to be used (when the third parties utilizes the photographic image data for the purpose of gain to make a profit), the third parties may pay a license fee to the owner or the like of the photographic image data on the basis of a predetermined calculation standard or the like in return.

[Brief descriptions of the drawings]

[Fig. 1]

A schematic diagram showing an embodiment of a personal image information registering/utilizing system according to the present invention.

[Fig. 2]

A schematic diagram showing another embodiment of a personal image information registering/utilizing system according to the present invention.

[Fig. 3]

A flow chart for explaining the flow of a processing of a personal image information registering/utilizing system according to the present invention.

[Fig. 4]

A flow chart for explaining the flow of a processing of a personal image information registering/utilizing system according to the present invention.

[Fig. 5]

A flow chart for explaining the flow of a processing of a personal image information registering/utilizing system according to the present invention.

[Description of reference characters in the drawings]

- 1 Personal image information registering/utilizing system
- 2, 13 Media reading means
- 3, 14 Personal data inputting means
- 4, 15 Use consent advisability registering means
- 5 Center server
- 6 Database
- 7, 16 Output means
- 8 Photographic image data
- 9 Personal data
- 10 Network
- 11, 12 Store server
- 17, 18 Fee paying means

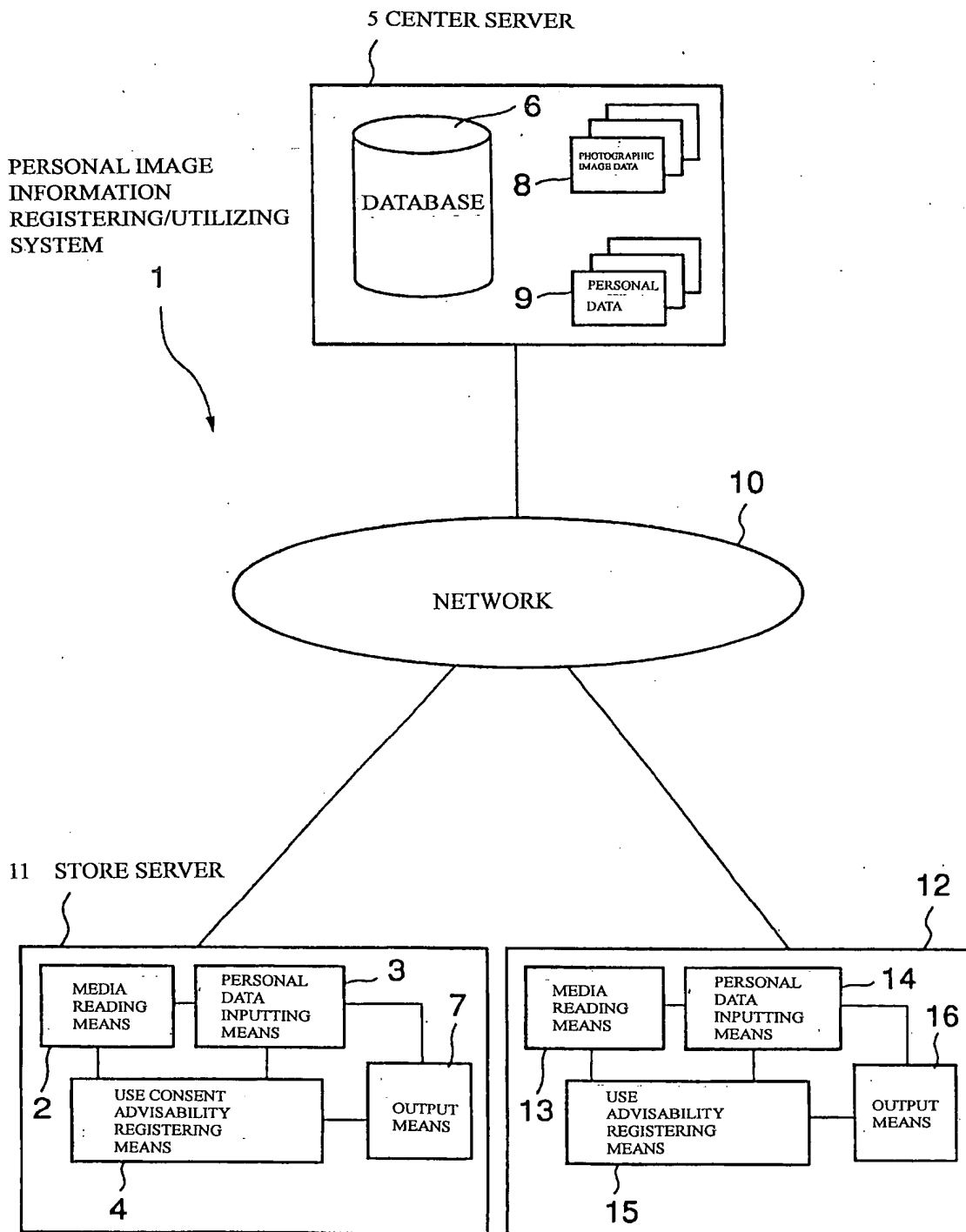


Fig. 1

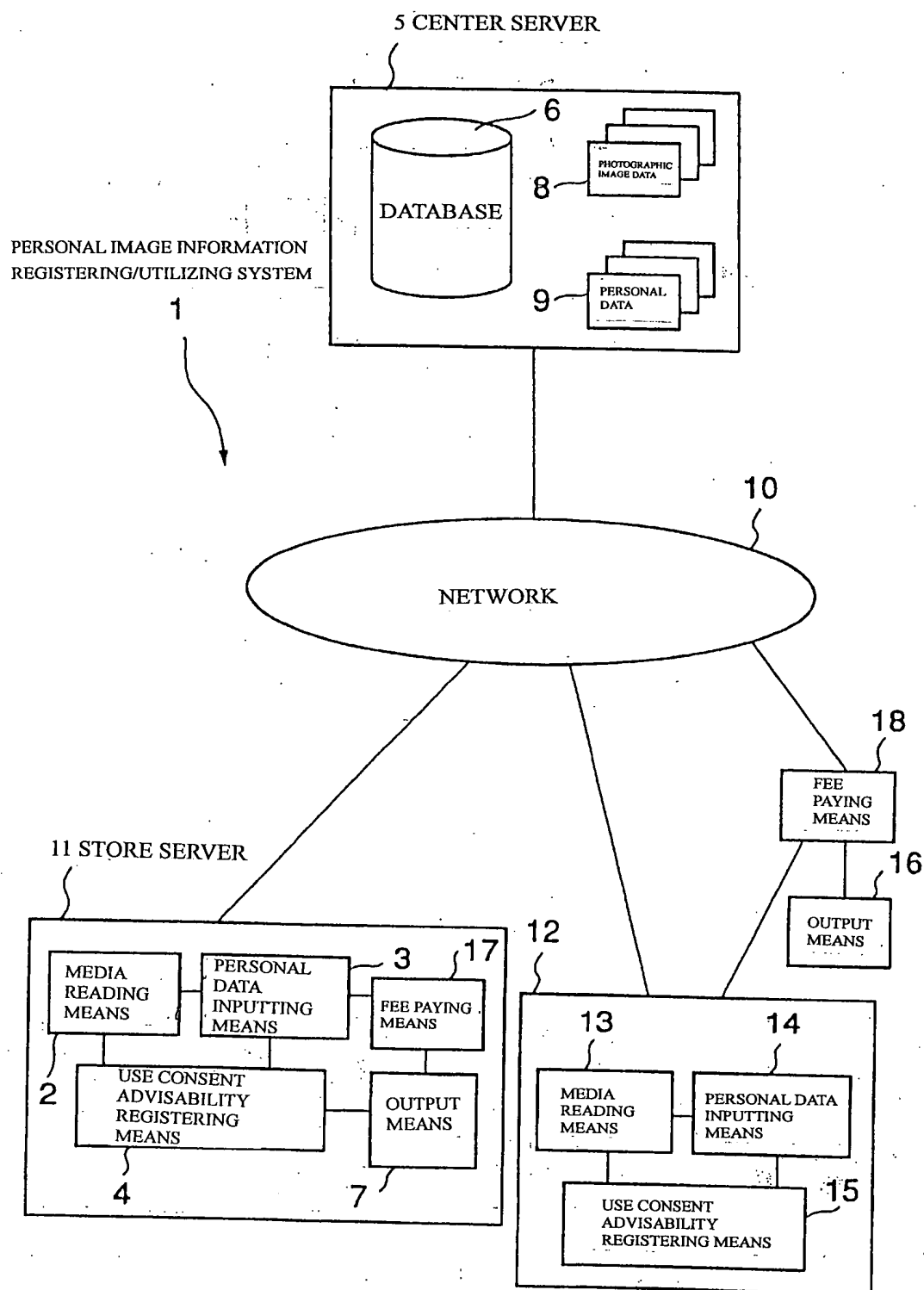


Fig. 2

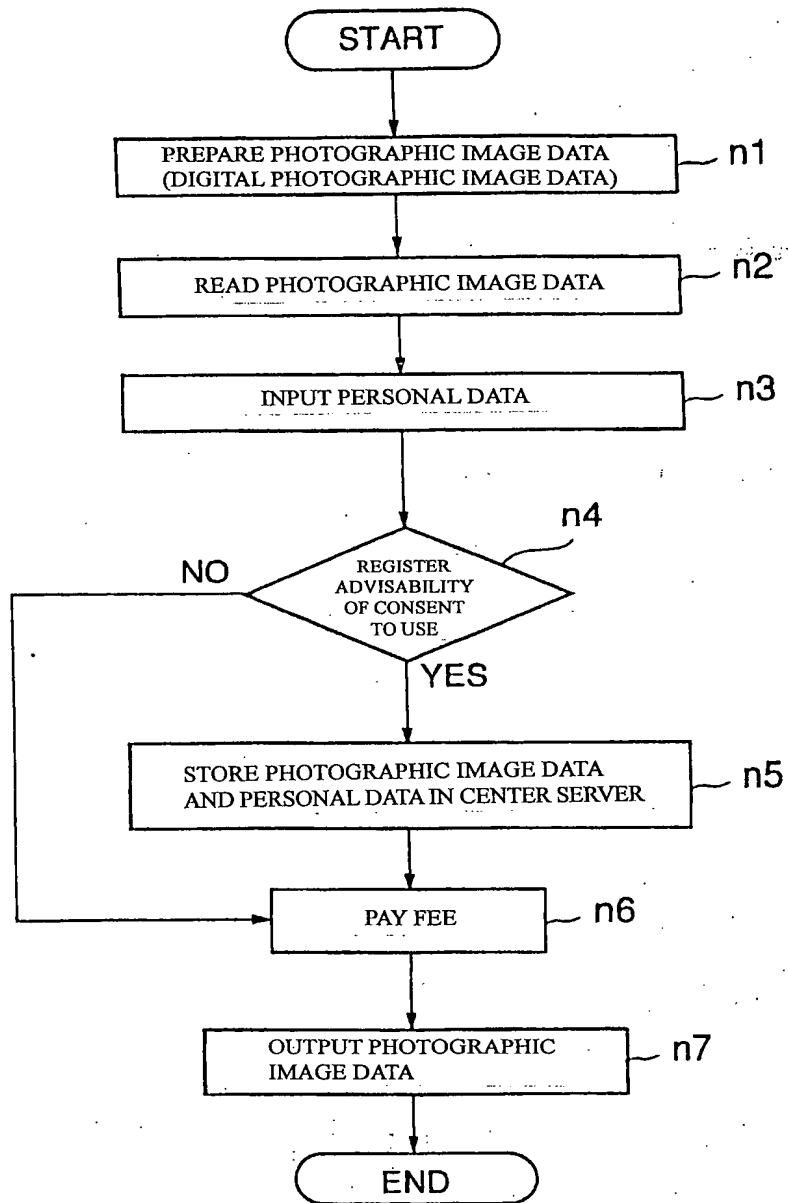


Fig. 3

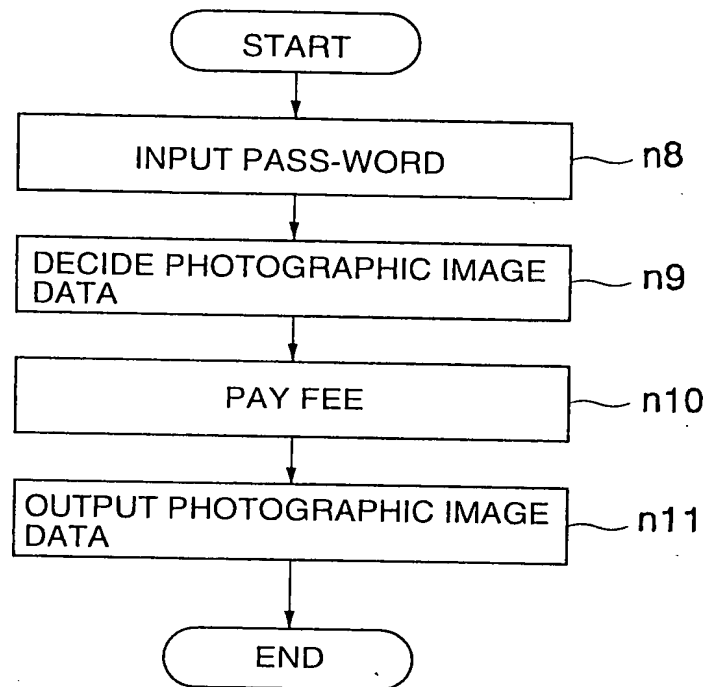


Fig. 4

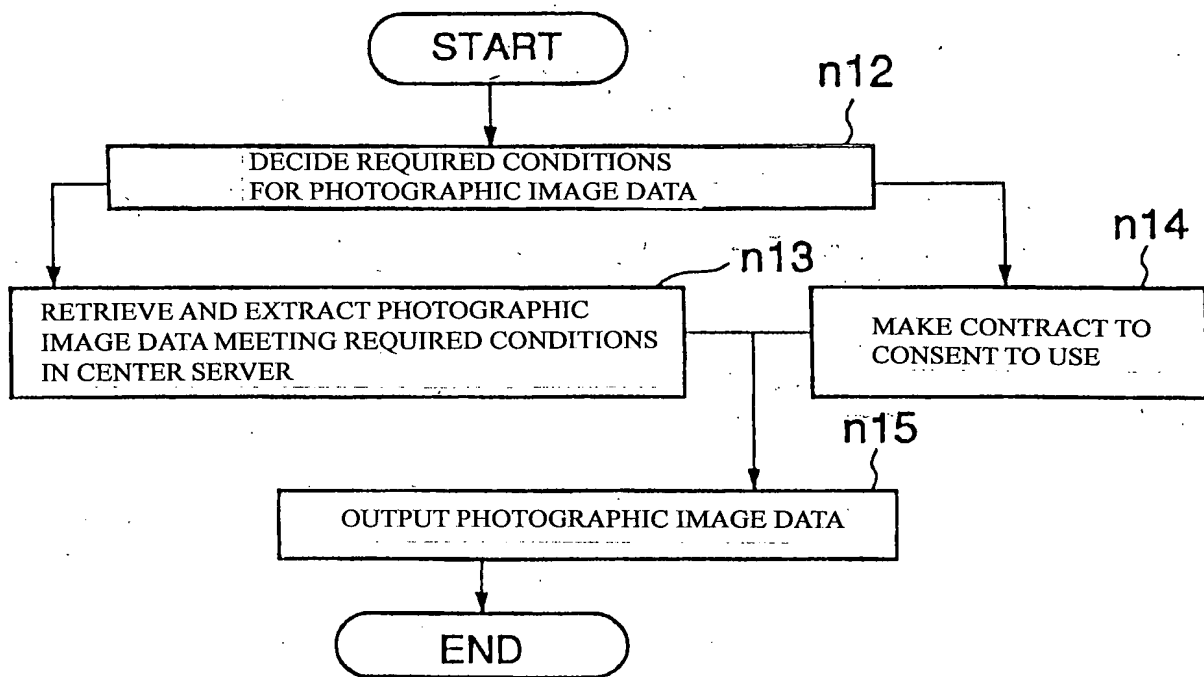


Fig. 5



[Document Type] Abstract of the disclosure

[Abstract]

[Object]

To provide a registration/utilization system of personal image information where prints of output of digital images can be obtained at a low price and third parties can use the digital images effectively under the license of the owner of the personal information or photographic subject himself/herself.

[Means for Solving the Problems]

This is a system comprising a media reading means that reads photographic image data shot by a digital camera, a personal data inputting means that classifies personal information of the photographic image data, a use consent advisability registering means of the photographic image data to the third parties, a database to retrieve and extract image data classified and requested from the said personal data, a center server that can accumulate the photographic image data and personal data and retrieve and extract those data by linking them and an output means of the photographic image data, where when a use consent advisability is registered, the photographic image data are transferred from the media reading means to the center server, the center server saves them, image data become targets of retrievals and extractions, and the photographic image can be output.

[Representative drawing]

Fig. 1